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ABSTRACT

Beginning elementary teachers (n=124) randomly selected from a pool of recent graduates and interns at a California State University campus completed the Teacher Concern Survey at the beginning and the end of their first year of teaching. The Teacher Concern Survey identifies three stages of concerns: (1) self--themselves and their own survival; (2) task--actual teaching duties; and (3) impact--related to the individual's abilities to be successful with students and the teaching-learning process. At the beginning of the year, teachers were most interested in self concerns. At the end of the year, the focus had changed to task concerns. Implications of these findings for restructuring teacher preparation and induction programs are outlined. For example, it is recommended that preservice teachers be instructed on procedural policies, recordkeeping, and classroom management at the beginning of their student teaching programs, and that they be expected to apply more complex teaching strategies later as they become more focused and concerned about content. (Contains 16 references.) (JDD)

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Analysis of Beginning Teacher Concern Data to Restructure Preservice Teacher Education

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Analysis of Beginning Teacher Concern Data to Restructure Preservice Teacher Education

National reports and surveys document the shortages in the supply of teachers (Futrell, 1989; Gunderson & Karge, 1992; Smith-Davis, 1991). These shortages are due to a variety of factors, including reduced enrollments in preservice programs, a "graying" out of the teaching profession, and teacher attrition rates (Bogenschild, Lauritzen, & Metzke, 1988). Between 40 and 50% of new teachers leave the profession within five years of starting teaching, most within the first year or two. In California, as many as 30% of new teachers leave teaching after their first year (Pearson & Honig, 1992). Reasons for this early attrition include factors linked to lack of targeted assistance for novice teachers, physical and professional isolation within the school site, difficult work settings, lack of orientation and support training, skills that are not sufficiently developed to successfully instruct and manage students, and exhaustion and depression (Pearson & Honig).

In devising means to address teacher retention as well as increased teacher effectiveness, many states are sponsoring grants to support and assist new teachers. As district, state, and university personnel work to originate plans for induction years, it is crucial that the new teachers themselves are included and focused on as the most valid data source in determining what assistance will be most beneficial. Entry years in the profession can be most crucial in the determination of not only how long an individual may remain an educator, but also in the development of that person as an effective, dedicated, and caring educator. As the true support needs and concerns of novice teachers are assessed, not only can induction support opportunities be strengthened, but preservice programs can restructure to address these concerns more directly.

Of course, some areas may only become a concern for a new teacher in the field, and cannot be appropriately addressed in a preservice format. But many novice teacher concerns could be allayed through direct teacher education programming.

The theoretical framework for this research was based on the question "What can colleges, universities, and districts do to restructure the education of preservice teacher candidates in order to ease the transition from student teacher to beginning classroom teacher?" Recent literature documents the importance of the induction year in establishing long term career success (Baum,1987; Feiman-Nemser, 1988; Futrell, 1989; Marso & Pigge,1987; Smith-Davis, 1991). To more clearly understand the transition years, one area for analysis can be the concerns of beginning teachers as they progress in their early career.

The *Teacher Concern Survey* (Rogan, 1988) is based on Francis Fuller's work on the developmental progression of teacher concerns (1974). Fuller believed the stages of concerns are developmental and related to teacher effectiveness (Fuller & Bown, 1975). This hierarchy is delineated into three stages: 1) *Self* - themselves and their own survival; 2) *Task* - actual teaching duties; and 3) *Impact* - related to one's abilities to be successful with students and the teaching- learning process. Fuller proposed this three-phase model of concerns expressed by preservice teachers as a way to describe how teachers-in-training move through a teacher education program. Other researchers have applied Fuller's model to teachers at various points in their careers (Guskey, 1986; Hall, 1979; Rogan & MacDonald, 1985). Rutherford & Hall (1990) propose that practicing teachers take approximately five years to move from self concerns to impact concerns, and suggest that some teachers

never fully experience the final stage of impact concerns. According to Borich (1992) the most effective teachers demonstrate a high level of concern with student impact items, usually corresponding years of teacher experience.

Method

One hundred twenty-four beginning teachers were randomly selected from a pool of recent graduates and interns from a California State University campus. Seven school districts in Southern California were represented as employers of the new teachers.

The subjects taught in grades kindergarten through sixth. They ranged in age from 23 to 50. The study included 19 males and 105 females. Subject-identified ethnic backgrounds included Anglo (n=84), African-American (n=3), and Hispanic (n=37). The subjects reported minimal experience in teaching. Their assigned class size ranged from 26 to 36, with a mean of 28 students. Only one subject had a Master's degree. All others had a Bachelor's degree plus graduate units.

The *Teacher Concern Survey* consists of 45 item stems to be ranked on a six scale Likert. The survey is composed of 15 item stems for each category based on Rogan's factor loadings (Rogan, 1988). The teacher is asked to complete the survey, thinking only of their current reaction. The question, "*When I think about teaching, am I concerned about this?*", is presented at the beginning of the survey. Teachers are asked to respond (1) not applicable, (2) not concerned, (3) a little concerned, (4), moderately concerned, (5) very concerned and (6) totally preoccupied. The subjects completed the survey at the beginning and the end of their first year of teaching.

Results

The analysis of data collected indicates significant statistical differences in concerns during the beginning year of teaching. The data confirms earlier literature suggesting teacher concerns may be delineated into three explicit phases. In accordance with Fuller's hypothesis, at the beginning of the year the teachers were most interested in *self* concerns. The mean of the 15 *self* concerns was 3.25, the *task* mean was 2.52 and the *impact* mean was 2.57. At the end of the year the focus had changed to *task* concerns. The end-of-the-year *self* mean was 2.67, the *task* mean was 3.58 and the *impact* mean remained at 2.5 (See figure). These differences were statistically significant according to an ANOVA ($p \leq .05$), with Tukey post hoc analysis specifying indicated significant difference in *self* and *task* concerns over time. Analysis of these concerns, as teachers move through developmental phases, may have specific restructuring implications. For example, if preservice educators are cognizant of specific periods during induction when certain areas may be most problematic, activities, experiences, and instruction can be provided to contribute to greater success during this time.

Figure-Teacher Concern Survey Data Comparisons

Category	Self	Task	Impact
Beginning mean	3.25	2.52	2.57
Ending mean	2.67	3.58	2.50

Conclusions and Implications

In analysis of this data our study confirms earlier literature suggesting teacher concerns maybe delineated into three explicit phases. It is proposed that knowledge of these early career phases has the following restructuring implications for teacher preparation and induction programs:

- Preservice content needs to be revisited at key times so that at each contact, deeper conceptual knowledge is acquired. This should occur during the preservice and induction periods.
- Preservice content should take into account the developmental growth process of new teachers. Preservice teachers are routinely instructed on procedural policies, record-keeping, and classroom management at the beginning of their student teaching programs. This is an area new teachers are often most concerned about. Later on in the program, it is crucial that more complex teaching strategies be offered as the new teacher becomes more focused and concerned about content. Classroom based experience, including both field work and student teaching, should stretch over the entire program, with the content being taught developmentally.
- Preservice assessments of teacher knowledge and abilities need to be aligned with district and induction assessments.
- Beginning teachers need to have ongoing contact with the university faculty, administrators, and teachers at the site in a collaborative relationship. It would be helpful if these relationships could be maintained and nourished in the first two years of the new teacher's employment.

- Professionals working with new teachers need to recognize that a new teacher should not be held to the highest standards of excellence, and will continue to grow. Induction programs should be designed to pick up where preservice programs stopped, and the universities needs to be involved in that effort to help coordinate a smooth transition.

This study has implications for restructure of teacher education and induction programs. What is learned by analysis of beginning teacher concerns should help shape curriculum in teacher preparation courses, linking preservice training directly to perceived areas of greatest need, and strengthening the already existing connection between research and practice in teacher preparation programs. Potential significance of this project relates directly to the timely research on teacher induction and retention and possible comparative findings.

In conclusion, assessment and analysis of self-identified concerns of new teachers is only one of many possible means by which to gather data for reform of preservice and induction programs. But even in isolation, this information allows those structuring such programs an important insight as to the needs of new teachers. Such insight may prove invaluable as we attempt to not only retain, but improve our nation's teachers.

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